



Pyongyang Ping Pong

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President and C.E.O.

We were sitting together at dinner in early June when my former boss, Clinton Administration Defense Secretary Bill Perry, commented that he

was not hopeful at this point about getting North Korea to move away from its nuclear weapons path. And I have to agree with him. It seems as though the DPRK has been on a steady road toward becoming a nuclear weapons state, beginning in the mid-1990s when it barred international inspectors from its nuclear facilities, and continuing with its latest missile tests this May. None of the various talks, deals and agreements to which the North Koreans have been a party since then, or the sanctions that have been applied, seem to have fundamentally altered their trajectory.

The Obama Administration is just beginning to formulate a strategy for dealing with North Korea, and it seems to me that more talks, sanctions and deals alone are unlikely to divert the North Korean leaders from their objective. So what might work with North Korea?

Leaders of closed societies often manipulate their people by exaggerating the success of their own system and painting an inaccurate portrait of an outside world in which threats to their survival are imminent. This keeps the level of tension inside the society high, justifies the population's sacrifice to pay for a big armaments budget when the government is not able to meet their basic demands for food and other necessities, and incidentally helps to keep the leaders in power so they can protect their citizens from the supposed menace from afar. This dynamic is at work today in societies like North Korea and Iran, as it was in the Eastern Bloc countries during the Cold War.

Over a period of 20 years from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, I watched and participated as the Soviet and Warsaw Pact countries disintegrated from within, after which they became much more amenable to work with and less of a security threat to the United States. This process was accelerated by the gradual penetration of contact with the United States and Western Europe. Scientists, businesspeople, cultural groups, tourists and others from outside the region developed relationships with people and organizations inside the Soviet Bloc. Through these contacts, citizens of the Eastern Bloc states learned that their own system was not very successful and that the societies outside the region were not the dark and threatening

places portrayed by their own governments. The Voice of America, the BBC and Radio Free Europe broadcast information into the region that contradicted the official government line. Partly as a result of this contact, different leaders eventually came to power, starting with the Solidarity movement in Poland in the 1980s, and ending with the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

One of the few strategies that still has promise in diverting the North Koreans from their nuclear aspiration is this kind of opening of their closed society to contact from abroad, which could undercut the hold the three-generation ruling dynasty has on government and with it, perhaps their nuclear policies. Now is the time for our government, public organizations, foundation funders, scientific groups, human rights organizations, businesses and émigrés from Korea to redouble their efforts to make contact with people and organizations within North Korea, to bring the light of realistic information about the outside world to the "Hermit Kingdom."

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But what if, even with such efforts, North Korea's nuclearization is inevitable? What then, for the United States? We have at least two routes to pursue with the DPRK. First, we can take steps to defend ourselves, and our allies in the Asia-Pacific region, against the threat

from their nuclear weapons. This may mean pursuing a theater missile defense capability, with the ability to shoot down North Korean missiles shortly after there are launched. Partners for such a program could include South Korea and Japan, perhaps also Russia and China.

The other route is one we have taken with India and Pakistan, mainly through Track Two private diplomacy. And that is to ensure that the nuclear weapons the North Koreans have are handled as safely as possible, to avoid their intentional or accidental use. Recognizing the inevitable after Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998, experts at Stanford and others in the United States have worked behind the scenes with the Pakistani military to improve political and military controls on the deployment and handling of their nuclear weapons. They have also fostered talks between the Pakistanis and Indians to set up hotlines and prior notification of test launches – the kind of provisions for management of nuclear weapons that have existed between the U.S. and the USSR – and now Russia – for years, designed to prevent a test launch from being misperceived as a nuclear attack or other misperceptions that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons. Ω